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INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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Mr. HICKENLOOPER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany S. J. Res. 96]

The Committee on Foreign Relations, having had under consideration Senate joint resolution (S. J. Res. 96) to strengthen the foreign relations of the United States by establishing a Commission on International Telecommunications, reports the resolution to the Senate, with amendments, and recommends that it do pass.

1. SUMMARY OF SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 96

Senate Joint Resolution 96 provides for the establishment of a Commission on International Telecommunications consisting of 9 members, 5 to be appointed by the President of the United States, 2 by the President of the Senate, and 2 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Commission is directed to study the subject of international telecommunications and to recommend to the President and to Congress agreements, policies, and measures which will encourage the effective use of this media in fostering cooperation and mutual understanding among the free nations of the world. The bill authorizes \$250,000 to carry out the work of the Commission which is to make a final report not later than December 31, 1954. Such amendments as were adopted in the committee with respect to Senate Joint Resolution 96 are designed to make minor adjustments in the wording of the original draft, to correct typographical errors, and to make provision for proper accounting and auditing of appropriated funds.

Provision is made for a small staff but it is anticipated that much of the work to be done by the Commission would be carried on by engineering groups and consultants.

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2. GENERAL PURPOSE

In its report (No. 406, 83d Cong., 1st sess.), the Special Subcommittee on Overseas Information Programs of the Foreign Relations Committee, under the chairmanship of Senator Hickenlooper, noted that the Information Administration had not kept pace with important developments in telecommunications, particularly television. The special subcommittee also pointed out that the Information Administration had "paid little attention to new telecommunications methods" for the mass dissemination and exchange of international information. The subcommittee recommended that a national commission be established "to study the present status and the potentialities of the international use of all forms of telecommunications." Senate Joint Resolution 96 which the Foreign Relations Committee approved without objection, would carry into effect this recommendation of its special subcommittee.

BACKGROUND

The past decade has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the technology and use of television and other means of telecommunications. It is now possible, with existing engineering knowledge, to construct regional telecommunications networks which would link the following regions in instantaneous television communication: The United States and other North Atlantic countries; the United States and Latin America; the western Pacific; southern and southeast Asia; and the countries of the Mediterranean. The day of worldwide television, from an engineering standpoint, is fast approaching.

This new and rapidly developing instrument of communication can be of inestimable value in carrying out the foreign policies of the United States. Over 50 nations are already in the process of developing television networks. The number of television sets in use abroad has increased from 500,000 in 1950 to over 3 million in 1952. Within a few years, the worldwide potential television audience may number as many as 400 million people.

As a medium of the overseas information program, television, if properly developed, could contact far vaster audiences than is now possible with the shortwave broadcasts of the Voice of America. And it could contact them more effectively. The combined visual-audio impact of television makes it an ideal medium for the exchange of ideas with other countries and for the dissemination of information about this country and its policies. As an educational instrument, moreover, television holds great promise as a device to help overcome illiteracy and to alleviate the agricultural and sanitation problems in the underdeveloped areas. Television, in short, could become a tremendous force for the growth of international understanding, international trade, and international peace.

The United States has spearheaded the technical development of television. Other countries are seeking our advice and guidance in developing their own television networks. If there is a default of our leadership in this field, television will develop haphazardly among the free nations, thereby making increasingly difficult, if not impossible in a technical sense, the ultimate linking of these nations through this new and vital means of communication. Initiative on our part now,

on the other hand, will not only encourage a rational development of international television but it will probably insure a place for United States information telecasts on the networks of other countries as they come more fully into operation.

There is a need to move promptly in this field. The U. S. S. R. has already established uniform telecasting standards among the countries of the Soviet bloc and is reported to be planning the installation of transmitters capable of delivering television signals to many free nations.

The immediate requirement is for a thorough study of the developments to date in international telecommunications and for an exploration of the problems and prospects of establishing international cooperation in this field. Such a study and exploration is essential if we are to design national policies which will safeguard and advance the interests of the United States both in the peacetime and emergency use of this instrument of international contact.

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